

July 18, 2017

Chairman John Barrasso
Water and Wildlife Subcommittee
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6175

Ranking Member Tammy Duckworth
Water and Wildlife Subcommittee
Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6175

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Duckworth:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we urge you to support and advance S. 1537 to reauthorize the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, now titled the Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Act.

Since 2002, the **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act** (NMBCA) has functioned as a matching grant program to fund projects that conserve neotropical migratory birds--those that breed in or migrate through the United States and Canada and spend the non-breeding season in Latin America and the Caribbean. Funding for NMBCA includes partnership programs to conserve birds in Latin America and the Caribbean, where over 4 billion birds representing over 386 species spend their winters, including some of the most endangered birds in North America.

NMBCA has a proven track record of success over more than a decade. Since its inception, the program has received more than \$58 million to positively affect 4.2 million acres and partners have leveraged federal funds with more than \$221 million in non-federal contributions – nearly a four-to-one match ratio. All NMBCA grant requests must be matched with non-federal funds at least 3 to 1.

Migratory birds make a significant contribution to the US economy. Recreation associated with migratory birds is big business in this country. The [*2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*](#), conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that out of nearly 47 million birdwatchers in the United States, 41.3 million of those are around-the-home observers who spend over \$4 billion on bird feed and \$969 million on nest boxes, bird houses, bird feeders, and bird baths annually.

Migratory birds are unique in that they migrate long distances and cross political boundaries. Many species of birds that we see in our back yards are significantly affected by the habitat conditions in their wintering grounds which are located outside of the U.S. Without the support NMBCA grants provide for conservation actions on these wintering grounds, there is an increased likelihood more migratory bird species will become endangered or threatened in the U.S. resulting in the need for even more resources to be allocated. The Golden-winged warbler, a state species of greatest conservation need identified by state fish and wildlife agencies and a species which the U.S. has invested significant funding into conserving, is an example of a targeted species that the NMBCA focuses on to protect the investment we make at home.

These birds and many other species are experiencing significant population declines making it more important than ever to support funding and legislation reauthorizing this program, so we urge the Committee to move the NMBCA reauthorization bill, now titled the Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Act, through the Committee process expeditiously.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to working together with you on this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Steve Holmer,
Vice President of Policy
American Bird Conservancy

National Audubon Society

Nick Wiley,
President
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

The Nature Conservancy

Ducks Unlimited

National Wildlife Federation

Bruce Thompson, PhD, CWB®
President
The Wildlife Society

John W. Fitzpatrick,
Director
Cornell Lab of Ornithology